

# The Clerk's Black History Series



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## Georgia Teresa "Tiny" Gilmore

(February 5, 1920 – March 3, 1990)

Unsung Hero of Montgomery Bus Boycott / "The Club from Nowhere"



**Georgia Teresa "Tiny" Gilmore** was born February 5, 1920. A mother of six children with no formal education, she worked for white families for most of her life as a cleaner, a cook and a midwife. Although she has been described as the "sweet, motherly type," Georgia was known for her fiery temper, especially when it came to the fight for civil rights. She resisted racial injustices and Jim Crow laws and was outspoken, even confronting white men if they disrespected her or her family. Her fiery temper and determination helped drive the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott.

After Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on December 1, 1955, local black leaders and the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), declared a boycott of the Montgomery bus system. Although Georgia had already refused to ride the bus, she joined the MIA and became a very vocal opponent of the systematic racism she experienced. Coordination of the boycott was a massive undertaking and included meetings, carpools of workers with long distances to walk and fundraising. Georgia, along with many other women looking to help, decided the best way to fundraise would be to cook and sell food. They went from selling sandwiches to selling full dinners along with pies and cakes. Georgia and her "club" collected money and gave it to the MIA officers to support the cause. The money was recorded as coming from "nowhere." Thus "The Club From Nowhere" made up of cooks, maids, and service workers, was founded. Only Georgia knew who bought food and donated money. When her employer at the National Lunch Company heard of her activism and participation in the boycott, she was fired and blacklisted. Unable to find work, Minister and Community Leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., suggested Georgia could continue cooking from her home and even helped her remodel her kitchen to meet city code standards. Georgia would wake up at four o'clock in the morning and began making stuffed pork chops, meat loaf, barbecued ribs, fried fish, spaghetti in



**GEORGIA GILMORE**  
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Georgia Gilmore, cited as a "solid, energetic boycott participant and supporter," lived in this house during the days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Once arrested on a bus, Gilmore was ardent in her efforts to raise funds for the Movement and organized "Club From Nowhere," whose members baked pies and cakes for sale to both black and white customers. Opening her home to all, she tirelessly cooked meals for participants including such leaders as Dr. Martin Luther King and Dr. Ralph Abernathy. Her culinary skills continued to aid the cause of justice as she actively worked to encourage civil rights for the remainder of her life.

meat sauce, collard greens and black-eyed peas, stuffed bell peppers, corn muffins, bread pudding, and sweet potato pies. She cooked lunch daily out of her kitchen for people involved in the boycott, including Martin Luther King, Jr. When King, who called Georgia "Tiny" needed a safe and secret meeting place, he would often have them at Georgia's house. Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy ate in Georgia's Kitchen.

In 1959 Georgia took on the City of Montgomery (See *Gilmore v. City of Montgomery*) challenging segregation in Montgomery's public parks.

In a 1986 interview, Gilmore credited African-American women with being a driving force behind the boycott's success saying, "you see, they were maids, cooks, and they was the ones that really and truly kept the bus running."

Georgia Gilmore died in early March 1990, with her home being commemorated as a historical site. Her son, Mark Gilmore Jr., went on to become a Montgomery, Alabama city councilman.

